

A. Y. Barnett

The
Adventures
of a
Boomer Op.



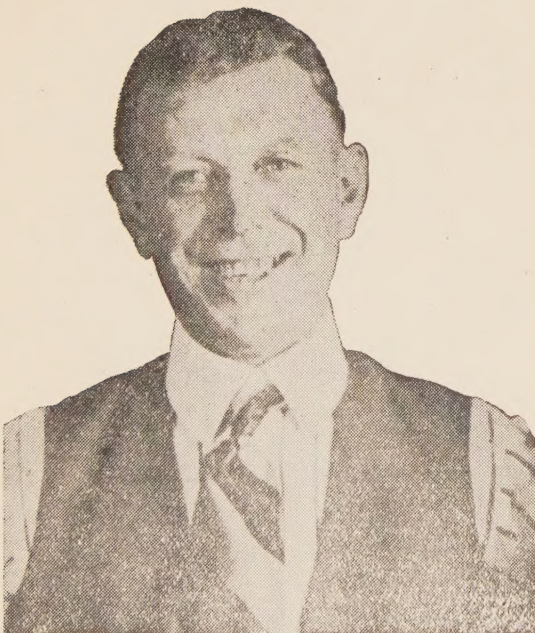
By
Marcus E. Smith

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Letter
Number
One

Denver, 19---

Dear Hi:

Well, Hiram, I just arrived back from "The Land of Greasers and Tarantulas," New Mexico, and between you and I, NEVER AGAIN

For four long weeks I was working at Los Villas, N. M. (meaning "No More"). Working at that place was a pastime, but keeping from going crazy was an occupation.

Quiet, why honest to gosh, a Carnegie Library would sound like a boiler shop, compared to that town, and I didn't have any more business than a woodpecker would have in the middle of the Great Desert.

Town? Did I say town? Well, figure it out for yourself. The depot was a Chicago & Atlantic box car, number 41144—sounds like a policy paddle—back of the depot was a coal shed and the town consisted of one inhabitant, and that was me.

Once a week the local freight stopped to leave me water and provisions. Outside of this crew, the only human beings I ever got to see was Jimmy Jackson, and the section foreman, a fellow named Hoskins, both of Los Vegas.

Jimmy Jackson was formerly from Winfield, Cowley County, Kansas, of which fact he reminded me every so often, which was quite frequent.

Jackson used to come over in a flivver, and you could hear him coming thirty minutes before



Scene near East Switch, Los Villas, N. M.

he arrived; at first, I used to go out and look up to see if it wasn't an aeroplane. He didn't have any horn; he didn't need it on that "cootle" of his. Old Doc Yak's car had this one beat a million ways.

Jackson's specialty was telling lies, and I claim he is the World's Champion, and swear, Boy Howdy, he had lost all the religion he ever did have; he would have made a "Bullwhacker" sound like a preacher when it come to that line of talk.

He worked over at Vegas in a place called a Nolson, you probably know what I mean, but before this he claimed to have been a prize fighter, back in Missouri and Kansas, but had to quit on account of his hearing, because once he got into a fight on the street in St. Joe, and when the fellow roared "Quit," Jackson didn't hear him and almost beat him to death before they pulled Jackson off.

He said he had an awful right on him, and one time he struck at a guy and the fellow dodged and he struck a horse and killed it.

I came to the conclusion that the best thing for me to do was to try and get along with him, as it looked to me that to monkey around getting him riled up, would be too much like flirting with Kingdom Come.

Well, things went along, till one day the auction foreman happened to drop in, when Jackson was in the middle of a story about a head of cabbage he raised out in Cowley County, that ten

men on horseback, rode under it to get out of a rainstorm one day.

Hoskins scratched his head a minute, then said "That reminds me of the time I was working in the Brass Foundry at Mansfield, Ohio, where we once made a brass kettle, that had three hundred men working on it at one time, and they were so far apart that they couldn't hear each other pound."

"What would they want with a kettle that big for?", Jackson wanted to know.

"To boil that cabbage in" replied Hoskins.

Well Hiram, when the scrap was over, the man from Winfield had knocked off work for the day, and Hoskins and I used up the beefsteak that I was going to have for dinner, to bring the color back to Jimmy's eyes and the last time I saw him, he was headed East and traveling fast.

This happened on a Thursday and on Friday I called up the Chief Dispatcher at Vegas and told him my sister was sick in Denver and that it was necessary that I start at once.

"Can't give you any transportation" said he.

"Why can't you?", I wanted to know.

"Because", says he, "you are quitting me, you never had a sister, you fellows must think this company runs trains to accommodate Boomer Ops, if I relieved every one of you fellows, that ask me to and furnish transportation, we would

have to run a special train to take care of you, so "Nothin' Doin'".

What do you know about that Hiram? Some one had been talking, you could see that, or else how would that Chief Dispatcher ever found out that I didn't have a sister.

Well, all I have to say is, that if I was working for a farmer and had quit him, and this said farmer happened to be going to town in a rig and wouldn't let me ride, I'd think he was a stingy devil, wouldn't you?, and I can't see any difference with the railroad company, they have trains going to Denver.

Anyway, I quit Saturday and went to Vegas to see this aforesaid chief, and got what money I had coming to me, but he still stood pat so far as transportation was concerned; however I got to Denver just the same and in the same old way, except this time it was an open ventilator on a Banana Special.

Am stopping at old lady Swanson's, down on Seventeenth street, the same place you and I used to board a few years ago.

Everything here is just the same, with the exception that Swanson has developed a taste for Kimmel and late hours and the old lady has the rolling pin habit, with a batting average around 500, and from what the boarders say, Swan hits the prayer rug and takes the count every so often, directly after he reaches home.

One of these days she will swing too hard I suppose and then the only place a fellow will be able to see Swanson will be in the family album.

She was telling me how good-for-nothing her man had gotten to be, said of late he was wearing out two pairs of pajamas to one pair of shoes, sleeping late and all that.

The parks are all open yet and full of Moonlight and Spooners, puts me in mind of Michigan City, Indiana, during the Western Union strike in 1907, you could stand by the sailors monument, there at the entrance and throw a stone at random and hit an op' at every throw.

The boats brought them over from Chi' by the dozens and a fellow couldn't stroll thru the park anywhere, without falling over one of them holding hands with some fairy.

Maybe the parks here are not so full of 'ops as the one in Michigan City, but I'll bet there are more turtle doves roosting around on the benches, than there are niggers in Alabama.

Yesterday I passed by the police station and saw the place where they make big ones into little ones, Hiram, and from the looks of the pile on hand, they better be sending for you again, for it looks to me like business is piling up.

Well old top, I suppose the next place you hear from me will be somewhere up in the Northwest, as there don't seem to be any jobs east of Denver, so I guess I will meander out towards Billings,

Mont., or Sheridan, Wyoming, can't tell just where I will stop.

Anyway, will find something to do and you know there is one privilege us 'ops have that a soldier hasn't and that is, if we don't like our job we can quit and go somewhere else.

Will write as soon as I get settled . 73.

Bill.

RULE "G"

"The use of intoxicating drinks
While on duty is prohibited
Nor must you ever, ever go
Where "Wet" goods are exhibited"
"Their Habitual use," it goes on to say
Or frequenting the places
Where it is sold, is sufficient cause
For dismissal, in all cases."
So when you feel an awful thirst
Coming on you, Brother
Take my advice, and keep away
From this and that and 'tother.
Go fill yourself up to the neck
With good old mountain water
It will quench your thirst and keep you cool
But never make you totter.
The Railroads do not want a man
That they cannot depend on
So lend a hand, do what you can
For a good cause ,well intended.

COULDN'T GET AHEAD OF M. D.

This was contributed by a Mr. Hefferman.

Mr. Cowen, a farmer near Cadillac, Mich., sent the following to Train Master M. D. Fohey at Owosso, Mich.

My Razor-Back
Strolled down your track
One week ago to-day
Number Nine
Came down the line
And snuffed his life away
You see M. D.?
You can't blame me
For it was a defective gate
So kindly send
A check for Ten
The debt to liquidate

Mr. Fohey sent the following reply to Cowan.

Number Nine
Came down the line
And killed your pig, we know
But Razor-Backs
On Railroad tracks
Often meet with woe
The check for ten
We cannot send
And know for which you pine
So bury your dead
Place over his head
"Here Lies A Broken Swine."

Letter
Number
Two

Laurel, Mont., 19---

Dear Hiram:

Seventy-two hours from Broadway and a thirty-seven dollar doctor bill on my hands, and as the cow puncher said, "A foot of snow on the ground and not a drop of whisky in the house."

The whisky part, as you know, does not bother me a bit but I sure would like a piece of "Jack", because if money talks, there is no scandal going on in my pocket.

That last day in Denver, I caught cold, and the trip from Denver here didn't help matters, what, with riding in a "Crummy" that had about as much ventilation as the inside of a vacuum cleaner.

It had been drizzling rain all afternoon in Denver and that evening, while strolling down Sixteenth street toward the viaduct where the C. B. & Q. freight house is located, it began to snow, and by the time I had reached the yards, where I figured on finding Ways and Means of transportation to the Northwest, it had become a regular blizzard.

While stepping along through the dark, trying to find a string of cars with a caboose attached to them, some guy with a lantern hollers through the storm at me.

"Hey, Bo, are you the bird shipping with these elk?"

"Mebl'y so" says I, not knowing just what was coming off, but you know that's me all over, playing safe.

"Well," says he, "we've been waiting for you for some time, pile on, because we want to get out of here, these elk are due in Cody as quick as they can get there."

Anyway, I "Piled on", that is I hung on the side of one of the cars for about four miles, when we were switched on to a train.

You see, it was this way, these two cars were being shipped to Cody and the switch engine had hold of them waiting for some gink that was in charge and they took me for him—well, anyway, I wasn't going to throw a heaven-sent Christmas gift away, so that's the way I got started.

The next morning some time we passed through Cheyenne and at Wendover, we picked up some more stock that had come down from Northport.

There was a fellow along with the Northport stock so from Cheyenne to Bonneville I was to have company.

This fellow was a little sawed-off runt, with two eyes like a pair of dimes, and whiskers like a sea lion, he wore a pair of chaps and a hat the size of a Sells-Floto side show tent, and from what he told me he had been on a ranch over near Northport, but was cleaning up with these three cars of stock, after which he was going to settle down somewhere in Wind River Canyon.

His name was Head, I asked him if his initials were M. T., but he said "No" is was "A. Black Head," and I've been trying to figure out ever since, whether I slipped something to him, or he to me.

At some other seaport down the line we stopped to feed and water the stock, I told this bird I was going to hunt up something to eat and he said he wanted to see a friend himself, so we started up town, I dropped into a restaurant and he into a saloon.

The lunch room I entered, had about four hundred sheets of fly-paper draped around on different articles and about as many dishes of Daisy Fly Killer setting around all over the place and more dead flies than there ever were locasts in Egypt.

The man behind the counter asked me what I wanted, so after giving the place the once over, I concluded the safest bet was to buy something that had a shell on it, so I ordered a cocoanut and a hard boiled egg.

At that he charged me a quarter more than the place would have invoiced for.

When I came out on the street, some man was looking in through the window.

"They don't seem to have many people eating in there do they?", says he.

"No" says I, "they don't need only about three a week to make things pay, if they charge everybody like they did me."

Up town, about an hour afterwards I met Head, who by the way had filled up on booze, and had a bottle in every pocket, he said it was probably the last chance he'd ever get to oil around before they put the country on the bum so he thought he'd take advantage of it.

I asked him what he'd do after booze was voted out, he said he didn't know, but supposed he'd have to get married, as a fellow had to have some kind of excitement. There you are Hiram, always Storm and Strife.

Well, any woman that would ever take to that fish, would either be doing one of three things, Gathering knickknacks, hankering to change her signature, or else because she would want "Mrs." chiseled on the family tombstone, because he was about as handsome as a walrus.

He got off at Bonneville.

When the train arrived at Laurel, I hunted up a Doc., and after he had went over me three dollars worth, sentenced me to seven days at the Hospital.

Am just getting around again, feeling a little weak, but think in a few days will be able to tackle a job, which I have in sight.

They want me down at BG—Billings a few days, so I will write you when I get settled.

Yours,

Bill.

Letter
Number
Three

Mr. Hiram Swiggers:

Dear Hiram:

I guess I will have to apologize for not writing but I've been so darn busy trying to become a millionaire, by working overtime, that I overlooked the fact that I owed you a letter.

'Ops are so scarce out this way that a fellow can't get off a-tall, unless the company is willing to close the office till you get back.

Honest, Hiram, they have men working that can't get a letter from home, let alone by Morse. Of course we get a real op' once in a while, one who is returning home and his tpn has run out, so he has to get a job long enough to have his grandmother die way down East, then he wires the Chief and is soon on his way.

There was one of this sort worked the opposite end of the Helena wire with me for some time, when I was on the graveyard shift here at Billings, Montana.

He had a habit of leaving the filing time off his messages and I'd have to call his attention to it about every other one and finally I got good and tired, and we had a show down, me hoping it would do some good, I told him, either do it right or get up.

He did pretty well for a while, but we'd still have words off and on ,later he sends me a bunch

one night gives me "30" and remarks he's leaving for Cuba next day.

"Have you got a return ticket?" I asks him.

"No" says he, "I haven't."

"Good" says I, "keep on going till you hit the West Indies, then go around and visit the place where Doc Cook came back from."

"I'm coming up and visit you when I pass through that village" said he.

"Better take out an accident policy before you do it" said I.

"Say," said he, "Do you know this man that signs "F" here, well he weighs 275 and can strike a blow of three hundred pounds."

"What's that got to do with it" I wanted to know.

"Nothing, only I am twice as big as he is" said he.

"Gee" I tells him, "you are most as big as I am."

Well next day I was trying to steal a march on Hoover and satisfy a craving for hot vittles, when some one touches me on the arm.

"R J" says they.

"Gwan" says I, without even looking up, "nothing doing, this is the first time I've been in front of the feed box today."

"From the looks of it" says they "you won't need any more for the next three months, if you get outside of all that."

I looked up and honest, Hiram, there stood a guy about six feet four and as broad as a moving van, was a good natured looking gink though, I could see that, easy.

He had on a big broad brim Stetson hat, a pair of boots and a Prince Albert coat. A stock man thinks I, but why the *"R J" I wonder

"Your face seems familiar" says I, "but maybe I've been reading the funny papers and got you mixed."

"I'm from Helena" said he.

"So" says I, "you sure have nerve to acknowledge it."

"Oh, I don't know as its so bad, I like the town, in fact I like it so well that I'm leaving it alone."

Right here, Hiram, I commenced to think, and in about thirty seconds something dawns on me, it some times takes that long for me.

"Say," says I "are you the man that signs "V" at Helena."

"No I'm not but I was" said he grinning.

"Well" says I, getting over on the other side of the table, "All I got to say is that you treat me the same way you are treating Helena, leave me alone."

"Sure" says he, "Shakem up" and he reaches me his mit about the size of a California ham, "I'm leaving this country where the west begins, but I want to leave it clean and with no hard feelings with the bunch I work with."

Pretty white, eh Hiram?, I'll say so, that fellow was a regular guy, and if he ever hits this trail again him and me are going to be real chummy.

We talked a while longer, then he said he guessed he'd go down to the Beanery and see what they had on the menu.

"Well so-long" I tells him, "Don't forget to tell them to put some mustard on the "Ham."

That reminds me, Hiram, the other night I was setting in one of these one armed man's restaurants, eating "hot dog" and trying to figure out some way to stop the war, when a guy with a paper collar and a frayed look, pussy-footed up to the chair next to mine.

He had a pint of "Java" in one hand and a half a dozen "life-savers" in the other, and became my neighbor.

He looked like he lived so far back in the sticks, that the owls roosted with his chickens, I gave him the once over and puts my street car fare in the other pocket. "Safety First" thinks I.

"Nice evening" he remarks sociable like, scooping up his coffee, like a Pennsy' Flyer taking water.

I nodded.

"Good coffee" said he.

"Best I ever heard" said I.

He nodded.

"First I've had to eat in a regular way for over a year" said he.

"How long were you in for" I asked him, and got a grin for it.

"I've been on a ranch, I'm a dry farmer" said he.

"Well," I tells him, "this town is wide open."

"You don't get me" said he, "I am running a dry farm, this is the first time I've been in town for over a year. Had in thirty acres of beans and onions and had to take care of them, brought some of them to town, sold another car load today, I'm going to live on beans and onions alone this winter, just to prove that it can be done."

"Well," says I, "all I got to say is, that any one who lives on beans and onions alone, ought to live alone."

"Says," says he, "you don't happen to be a telegraph operator do you?"

Discovered, thinks I, "Do I look like one?"

"Yes, I believe you do, you see I can generally tell by looking at a feller what his business might be, its kind of a gift I guess with me anyway, and I was thinking of my brother 'Hen', you see 'Hen'

works at Comart; he gets good money, too, and from what he tells me in his letters, he must be getting to be a Cracker-Jack operator, you don't happen to know him do you?"

"Well" says I, "I guess I'm guilty, I'm an operator and I think I've heard of 'Hen'".

I kidded him along for a spell, then beat it out, but about 'Hen', Oh Gee, I guess I do know him, that is, I know of him, he works at one of these one man stations, Comart, and if there ever was a "Ham what Am" 'Hen' is it.

The other night after I was thirty minutes getting a message to him, I says friendly like, "How's all the boys at Janesville?"

"? ?" says he.

"How old is Ann," I asked him.

"? ? ?" said he.

"Honerificableitutanicabus" I casually remarked.

"Sfd Stow" (send slow) says he.

Honest, Hiram, this guy is obtaining money under false pretenses; he told the company he was a telegraph operator I suppose. Well, he is not and I'll bet if his brains were dynamite and they ever exploded, there wouldn't be jar enough to make him wink his eyes.

They say, one night the dispatcher told him to make three copies of a "31" order; finally he got the order, repeated it back and received OK on

same. Pretty soon he called the dispatcher and asked him to send it over. The dispatcher asked him what the trouble was, 'Hen' says "You told me to make three copies and I got hold of a four copy manifold by mistake, so I tore it up." Think of it, ninety pounds from his neck up.

Well Hiram, I suppose you know that Red O'Brien is in Livingston, he was talking to me the other night, said he had been working out on the O S L at a place called Lima, but the boss there told him something that made Red sore, so he quit, I asked him what it was and Red said the boss told him he was fired.

I am pretty busy just now, Hiram, so will close and write more news next time.

Give my regards to the boys. 73.

*R. J. meaning "Relief" generally used by operators relieving each other.

Bill.

AN UTTER IMPOSSIBILITY

The section "Boss" was passing the cinder pit, he paused, scratched his head and said to one of the men in the pit.

"How menny min have yez down there Moike?"

"Siven" replied Mike.

"All Righth, Sind th' half av thim up wid their picks and shovels," returned the "Boss."

IT WAS THE OFFICE CAT

An operator in a Dispatchers office was receiving a long destination report from a "Way" station, when the wire suddenly went open.

After a few minutes, something began to come on the sounder that was more like wire trouble than anything else, it was absolutely unreadable, and for about five minutes he tried to "break" but could not.

Finally the wire closed firmly, and he heard "4" (Where Shall I go ahead) in good morse.

Grabbing the key, he said to the sending operator "Say!, What in H—— is the matter with you?, that's about the worst stuff I ever heard and I couldn't stop you, if you have a student monkeying around there keep him off the wire."

"Aw keep your shirt on," was the reply, "my girl called me to the door and I left the key open and the office cat got on the table and was playing with the key."

Letter
Number
Four

Great Falls, 19---

Dear Friend Hiram:

Well old Pal, I guess you will remember me telling you that Red O'Brien was at Livingston, well he was, but he isn't now, I'll tell you why, because he is here in Great Falls with me, it happened like this.

Some time ago Red was sending me one of those long consist reports that show the symbol, number, car initial, contents, etc., and he came to a car that I had never heard of before, so I called him on it.

"Come again on that initial" says I.

"What's the matter with it?", he wanted to know.

"It's a bum one" says I, "I never worked for that road."

"Zasso" says he, "and here I've been thinking I was working with a regular He Globe Trotter, why you blommin would-be boomer, that's up Anacanda way."

Now this steady grind had been getting on my nerves for the past week, my feet had commenced to itch, I'd been sort of wanting to take a ride on the steam cars to some place I'd never been so when Red says this to me, it comes on me full pressure.

"Gee" says I to him "Let's Go."

"When?" says Red, for he is always ready for a tramp.

"Look for me tomorrow night" says I, and the trip was on.

I got hold of the Night Chief Dispatcher, and immediately has my Grandmother die in Anaconda, whereupon, said Chief wires we tpn as far as Livingston, with instruction to call on the ticket agent there for the rest of the trip, also the one hundred iron men due yours truly for services rendered.

The next morning I boards the Cannon-Ball and was very soon "Chug-Chuggin" Livingston way.

There was a bald headed guy that weighed in the neighborhood of 350 pounds, waybilled to Great Falls sitting in the seat ahead of me, and a fellow that looked like a German spy in the seat behind.

The fat guy was carrying on a wireless conversation with an old maid across the aisle, and from the way it sounded he must have been sending close to two hundred words a minute. The old maid kept trying to "break" him but couldn't make it. I guess the fat guy wasn't adjusted.

"This thing of getting old before your time, I don't believe in" he was saying, "now take me for instance, I claim I am fifty two years young and about the only way I know I am getting old

is that I am getting bald, but a fellow can't help that, I've tried everything I can get hold of, but none of the seem—"

"Why don't you try furniture polish" I suggested.

"That's for furniture" said he, sizing me up.

"I know" says I, "but it's used on wood of all kinds."

This brought a cackle from the old hen he was sending to.

"Say," says Fat, "are you kidding me."

"No" says I, "just showing you a good time."

"Lay off" says he.

"I resigned last night" I told him.

Oh he was a pin head all right. I learned later he was from down around Kendrick, Oklahoma, one of those guys that wear a rubber collar and wash in the creek, that's him, you could take him for a walk any time, and I'll bet if I had the time I could sell him a Marconi farm and some speghetti plants to start it with.

I went up in the smoker and started a fire in my old R-5 and was just commencing to feel comfortable, when the Nut that sat in the seat behind me in the other car, slid in beside me.

"Have one on me" said he slipping me something that looked like a hand grenade and smelled like cabbage.

"Thanks" said I.

"Some I make myself," said he.

"Raise your own cabbage?", I asked him.

He laughed all that was worth.

"Say," said he, "that was a hot one you handed our fat friends about the furniture polish. Ha, Ha."

"It isn't half what I'd like to hand him" I returned, "he want's to stay out of the timber or the squirrels will eat him up, I'll bet if you would ask him, he wouldn't know whether John Brown was hung or hit by a switch engine."

"Where are you from?" he asked me.

"Dear old Chi." I tells him.

"I lived in Hammond once," says he.

"Too bad" says I, "but then its all over now, so there is no use feeling bad about it."

"What do you mean, its all over," he wanted to know.

"The war," says I.

"Gee," says he, "is that right?"

"Yes" says I, "All over Europe."

I guess he didn't like what I said to him, for he got up and took a different seat, Gee thinks I, another nut. I began to wonder what would happen if I'd go crazy too. Just then the porter

came by, and I handed him the hand grenade that the German Spy had given me, I didn't like the looks of that porter any way, after this I went back to the Diner.

When I was passing through the next car, the representative from Oklahoma was telling the conductor about his kid, he said he just got a letter from his wife and she said the kid was getting better of the "Hookin Coff," he said he always had to laugh at the kid, because he never could say "Hookin Coff" he always called it "He-Cups"—can you beat it? I'll say you can't.

I got off the train at Livingston, and Red was standing on the platform, his face looked like a 33rd degree stiff merchant.

"Smatter Pop" said I.

"It's all off" said he, "till I get my gold, yours is here but somebody has a brick on mine."

"Honest, Hiram, that man Red gives me a pain, he is always forgetting to pay his debts 'till some one reminds him of them.

"Say," says I, "why don't you change your name?"

"What good would that do, ain't O'Brien all right?"

"Sure" said I, "but Owen Moore would be better, come on lets go see your friend the J. P.

"He's no friend of mine" says Red.

"Well" says I, "if he isn't he ought to be, because it seems to me if I had as much business as you do with those guys I'd be calling them by their first names."

Anyway, we lifted the incumberance, and Red got his dough, so both of us having money, we decided to travel strictly First Class for once in our lives, therefore, took a Pullman, and double-headed in lower seven.

Along about two o'clock in the morning I woke up, Red was laying on his back snoring like an exhaust on a tug.

"Hey!, Red," I hollers, "how much of that wood are you going to saw," and I gave him a punch in the ribs hard enough to knock in a cylinder head, and all Red does is to turn over and start in a different key.

I guess by this time, we had about all the passengers in the car awake, and I was about as mad as I could get, when George shakes the curtain.

"Skuse me boss, but is dar anything I kin do?"

"Yes," I tells him, "you can get t'ell out of here."

"Yes, sah, all right sah, but I jess natcherly thought some one was a dyin'".

"Well there isn't," said I, "but there is liable to be before I get through with them," and then I gave Red one in the Solar Plexus.

"Z-z-z- Zew Zup" says Red.

"Choke him" says the guy in the flat above.

"Shut up," says I, "who is running this show, and just then Red rolled out on the floor and sit up rubbing his eyes.

"Anybody hurt," he wanted to know.

"What do you think happened?", I asked him.

"Wasn't it a wreck?"

"Sure," said I.

"Was it a head on?"

"No" says I, "it looks like some one made a drop and they hit too hard."

"Har, Har, Har," says George.

"Say!, look here old Chocolate Drop," says Red "why all this glee stuff."

"Nothin' sah, Skuse me sah."

"Well don't be spouting so much mirth, when a fellow is taking a little physical exercise or there'll be a representative missing at the next regular meeting of the Watermelon Trust, the rest of you guys can now disperse, also retire, the show is over," says he turning to the rest of the passengers.

I don't believe I'd more than gotten to sleep, when I heard them call "Great Falls," Red was awake now so we got out and hunted something to eat, and while we were doing this we missed our train and here we are now.

When we make up our minds what we are going to do, it will probably be too late to get it in this letter, so I'll tell you about it next time.

Guess' will close now and get this on the noon train.

Yours, Bill.

Letter
Number
Five

St. Paul, 19---

Dear Hi:

Well, you will remember the last letter you had from me, we, Red and I, were in Great Falls, but I guess you can see by this letter we are in St. Paul, Minn.

That morning in Great Falls got my Angora. Now Hiram, I don't want to knock any town, but between Great Falls and Billings I'll take Billings every time.

I can't say that I like the way Billings is laid out as well as I do Great Falls, but then I guess Billings has been dead longer than Great Falls.

Our breakfast set us back two dollars each, which goes to show Jesse James and his gang were pikers compared to this bunch we run into, I guess the joint was run by old man H. C. L.

Anyway, after we had "eat," we drifted into the telegraph and up to the counter.

"Where is the boss?", says Red to a wop with redder hair than Red has.

"He's on the wire trying to get hold of a couple of operators from Billings," said he.

"Well little one," says Red, "tell him we have arrived."

The boss came up, and as per usual, Red did the talking.

"How are you fixed for operators?", asked Red.

"Well," says he, pulling at his goatee, "where have you been working?"

"On the Ess Pee," lied Red.

"Uh-huh," says he again, "have you any papers?"

"Sure " says Red reaching in his vest pocket and I'll be a son-of-a-gun, if he didn't hand the old guy the "makins' ".

Well, Hiram, we got that job-NOT.

"Say," says Red, when we were out on the sidewalk, "I'm not near as heavy for that Anaconda country as I was."

"You and me both," I agreed.

"What's the matter with St. Paul?"

"Toot-Toot," says I.

Just then a train pulled in, the conductor went in after his train orders, the dope detectives commenced smelling for hot boxes and tapping the



“What’s the matter with St. Paul?” Red wanted to know. “Toot! Toot!” ’says I.

wheels in a professional way, and Great Falls, Grand Union Station took on Metropolitan airs.

"Now look here Red," says I, "you know what kind of a bone you always pull in an emergency, well, you let me do the talking in this case, where transportation is involved, unless of course you would rather spend money for car fare."

"Go to it Mr. Wisehammer," says Red, but even at that he came near spilling the beans again, as you will see.

I saw the "Brains" talking to the Yard Master and after they had broken loose, I saddled up to the Y. M. and asks the conductors name. You see I figured on being real chummy like, when I made my spiel, Oh you know how it is.

"It's 'Spud' something," says the Y. M., "I dunno his last name." I thanked him and we walked over to where the Con. was standing, and I spar for an opening, making believe I was going by, then turned sudden like and says, "well well, if it ain't 'Spud", and reaches out my mitt."

"You got me," said he, "but it seems to me I've met you before some place."

"Used to work in there," says I thumbing the telegraph office.

"Oh, yes, now I got you placed," said he, "but they change in there so often a fellow forgets names, let's see yours is——."

"Nelson, Bill Nelson," says I, Spud, shake hands with my friend Mr. O'Brien."

"Glad to know you Mr. O'Brien," said he.

"Say Spud," says I, "my friend and I want to get to St. Paul the worst way."

"Well," says he, "if that's the case, I believe I'd go back to Helena and take the N. P."

Don't you fellows recognize railroad men over here?", I asked him.

He studied this over a minute, "Have you got anything on you?"

"I have," says Red, making a move for his hip pocket, "and it's the best——."

I shoved Red out of the way, "we have an up-to-date" says I.

"That's good with me", said Spud motioning us to get on.

At St. Paul we both get jobs with the N. P., and I fall heir to the GO-Chicago quad, and the guy at GO signs "H."

Now I used to think that "T" Newyork, was the fastest wire in the world, that's the BUNK, but this wire was.

Say! the first hour that fellow shot messages over so fast that if each message had been a mile, and an engineer had been clipping off miles as fast as these messages were coming to me, the mile posts would have looked like a picket fence, and besides, he had the nerve to ask me if they were coming fast enough.

"That's all right, Mr. C. V. Barfield," I tell him, "keep them coming, and while you are at it, you might just as well leave the numbers off, because at quitting time it will be 800 messages, that's not bad for eight hours."

"Gee," says he, "if you think you are working fast, just wait 'till you get hold of this man "CV" that's on the receiving side, then you can talk."

This is my last day on GO-Chicago, the next A. M. I gets hold of a little way wire, to recuperate.

There was a man setting across the table from me, working the city wires, that put me in mind of a South Clark Street Pawn-Broker.

"My name is Isaac Silverman," says he, introducing himself to me.

"Ikey, how goes it" says I.

"How do you like it here?" he wanted to know.

"Better" says I.

"I see the boss had you on "Chicago" yesterday, how did you and the man "H" hit it?"

"We hit the high places" said I.

He laughed, "Where are you and "Torchy" from?"

"From all over," says I, "and from the way things look we will be from here in a few days."

"Come with me tonight, and I'll show you where they keep them cool," says he.

"Well" I tells him, "I'll have to see."

I was thinking of Red, honest, that guy bothers me a heap, he don't pay a bit of attention to Rule G, and when he gets started spending money he never stops 'till he's broke.

He never had a dollar, a week after pay day in his life, that I remember of except once, when he was pinched over at Phoenix for putting on a show.

Now I don't mind a little rubber-necking with our friend the camel driver, but I don't care to

have Red get started in bad, for you know, Hiram, as Mr. Phillips says, I am Q. W. W. (On The Water Wagon) and don't approve of this "Likkerin up" a-tall.

Well to make a long story short, I said nothing to Red about it, but that night, the Wire Chief holds me on an hour O. T. and Red and Ikey leaves the office together.

That's the last I see of them, 'till next morning, when they both blow in to the desk, drunker than seven million dollars.

I never let on I saw them and pretty soon I see the chief operator, hand both of them, red slips, and they beat it out.

That night I made it my business to drop in at the "Dutchman's" thinking perhaps I'll run into them there, but "Nothin Doin", so I questions the Bar-keep.

"See anything of a Red-head and a crooked nose gent loitering around here, past 24 hours?"

"Sure" said he, "friends of yours?"

"Was once" I tells him, "would you mind telling me what happened?"

Well he told me, and believe me it was some story, and from the way he explained it, it must



Red O'Brien and Ikey Silverman put on a show
at St. Paul which had very little
respect for Rule G.

have been some scrap also, he said there was more "knockin down" there in ten minutes than there is on a Suburban lines in ten years.

"That "Mick" is some scrapper, I'll say," said he lovingly.

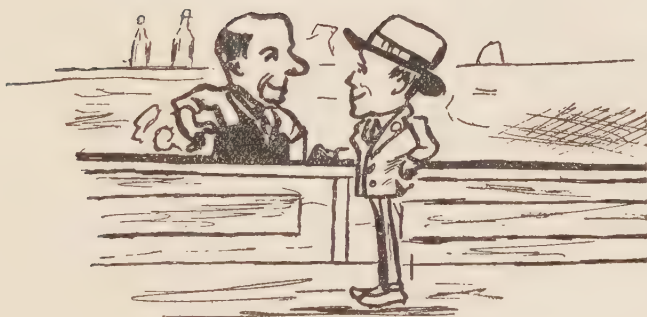
That was night before last, and this A. M. I received a note from Red, he and Ikey are in Chi., and he wants me to wire him \$25.00 and he will explain later.

Well I suppose I'll do it, but I sure am going to shake that guy before long.

I don't know but I will stay here a week longer than I figured on as I rather like the bunch here in the office, anyway, if I send Red that money, I'll need some more to carry me along, then I suppose I better hunt him up.

"Say! if you run across him there in Chicago, keep an eye on him and let me hear from you in the meantime.

I will have to look after the city wires and this wire of mine both now, we are short handed yet, and as I am trying to finish this letter at the office, will have to cut it out, because the Boss just called my attention to a Pink on LaCrosse from two "Newly-Weds," who are sending an S. O. S.



The Barkeep said there had been more “knockin’
down” there the night before in ten minutes
than there would be on a suburban
line in ten years.

to the home folks for money to return on. Gee! ain't this an awful world of woe?

Wish you would find out how Mr. Fuller is fixed for men, and ask him if there is a chance of me begging a sine, soon.

“73”

Bill.

Letter
Number
Six

Toledo, Ohio, 19---

Dear Hiram:

Say!, all I got to say and complain about this time is, if you ever want me to catch up with you, you will have to hurry and light some place, I'm no darn squirrel.

Here I arrived in Chicago, after a strenuous trip from St. Paul to find that you'd flew the coop, and destined Salt Lake City.

This "Boomin" around don't pay, Hi, and sooner or later you'll find it out, I have, and your Unk Bill is going to cut it cold.

I found Red O'Brien, he's working a premium wire at the "PO" exchange, and unloading schooners on the side, but nevertheless he had the twenty-five bucks safe in his sock for me, that I wired him from St. Paul.

Oh, Red is honest, and a good Pal, if he would just lay off of that red stuff, anyway he and Ikey Silverman have desolved partnership, he said Ikey was over at Michigan City, Ind., but I forgot to ask him whether he was in the Penitentiary or not—maybe he is working for the W & L E.

Say! Hi, I met a fellow on the train from St. Paul that I want to tell you about, this one particular bird should have a medal of some kind. He said he had been working on the C. P. R., had a

soft snap up there, where he had plenty of time to study law and fit himself out for a full fledged "Rent Collector" which he did, and was on his way back east, to Galion, Ohio, to practice his art.

He said he had been admitted to the Bar at St. Paul, but I know darn well it was later than that, unless he had a bottle parked on his hip, because he smelled like a German Picnic and the way he was hitting the water cooler, he must have needed water as bad as a duck on the Mojave desert, and what time he wasn't drinking ice water, he was talking a leg off of me, and if his chin-music had been morse he'd had Barfield looking like a cadet in a "Ham Factory."

Honest, Hiram, I got so tired listening to that Wind-jammer that I wanted to call a cop, and there wasn't anything to his gab, that was the worst of it, I'll bet he didn't know as much as you and me both put together, and if you'd have asked him what Bolsheviki meant, he wouldn't know whether it was a lingering disease or a pass word to the I. W. W.

He kept borrowing tobacco off of me all day, and said when we got to La Crosse, Wisconsin, he would get a package, but if he did, he must have put some camouflage on it, because I never seen it.

Well, Hi, I forgot to tell you where I am working but I guess you are not blind, and can read the address at the top of this letter, I am at Toledo, O., working in a yard office.

It's a train order job on a dispatchers telephone circuit, I took it because I was "Busted," but believe me I'll never be "Busted" again if I have to take a phone job to recuperate.

Honest, Hiram, I am as busy all the time as a wire chief in a sleet storm with the St. Vitus dance. I always did think there was something the matter with me, anyway, but if I keep this job long there will not be a doctor living that will be able to do a thing for me because I will go plain "NUTS."

Did you ever hear a dispatcher send a train order over a phone? Well it goes something like this: "N-U-M-B-E-R, No. F-O-R-T-Y, Forty F-O-U-R, Four, Forty-Four, 44, double four, W-I-L-L, Will, M double E-T, meet N-U-M-B-E-R, No. F-O-R-T-Y Forty, O-N-E, one, Forty One, 41, A-T, At H-I-G-G-S-V-I-L-L-E, Higgsville, Sig. Etc.

Then every man that it is addressed to repeats it back and if they have good luck they some times get through without laying trains out.

Now, Hiram, I don't mean that all Train Dispatchers send orders like this, but I am talking

about this particular one, I suppose that a phone on a dispatching circuit is fine biz, some places but this man never took out a correspondence course, I guess.

The Yard Master here is a card, fine fellow you know personally but one of these fellows that wants to make you believe he owns all of the west side of town.

He wears a diamond stick pin as big as a spark-plug on a twin six Pathfinder and a gold ring, that if it was melted up would make a loving cup, he runs this Y. M. job, and a loan-shark joint up town, down on Cherry street, to be exact, and by the way he is legal custodian of my ticker until pay-day.

He also wears a bunch of brush on his upper lip that would make a good soup strainer, and if he ever fell off of his legs he'd kill himself, because he is about six feet six in his stocking feet and as thin as a lightning rod on a corn crib.

He owns a Flivver, and Sunday night he took me for a ride out towards Hallett, and I'll say I never had such a ride in my life.

It was a nice evening and the people that lived along the highway were out on their porches, enjoying the air, until we sailed by at a pleasant little jog, which seemed to me like about ninety

miles an hour, leaving a cloud of dust behind us that looked like a Kansas Cyclone, then they got up and went inside.

"What's the hurry?" I asked him.

"I got to get back home as soon as possible," he said, "my wife wants me to take her to church."

"Well," says I, "you better go back some other way, because if you come back this way, those farmers will shoot you, and if you wife goes to church, it will be to your funeral."

About ten miles further on, we turned around and started back, but I don't believe we'd gone over a mile when something let loose and we made a station stop so sudden, that I came near going 'over the top,' my friend with the spinnach, got out, got down, and got under.

In thirty minutes he announced that about everything on the car was loose, the compression was leaking thru the gaskets from the cylinders into the spark-plugs, the carbureter was flooded with gasoline, two bearings gone from some place or other, the foot brake was broken and the car wouldn't run. Outside of this, she was perfectly OK.

We walked fourteen miles, caught a street car at the city limits and got home about eleven

o'clock, his wife went to church alone and I'll tell the world, fair, if that gink gets me in that car again you may use my hide for a door mat, with WELCOME on it.

Ever since this, I have attended strictly to business.

The night man that works from 4 P. M. to midnight has been sick and I have been doubling thru till 8 P. M. every night and bumming around the rest of the time.

I rented a room to sleep in, when I hit town, but all the bed I've seen for a week has been in the show window at the Lyon Store.

I had a card from Red last week, he says he will likely be up this way before long, well, I surely hope so and also hope he has a little change in his clothes, as I've only got about eight bits to the good and pay-day a week off yet.

Say, Hiram, apropos of clothes, as the fellow says, the other night as I entered the dining room, there sat a stranger in our midst whom I spotted at once as an op'. Isn't it funny, you can spot them every time, well we got to talking like fellows will, and I find out he has been dispatching trains down south somewhere.

He tells me he is a regular op' but just dispatches trains for pastime and now he wants a job telegraphing, and can I put his next.

I asked him what his name was, but honest, Hiram, I can't think of it now, but it sounded like a soft drink of some kind, anyway, I promised to look around and perhaps there will be something come under my personal observation etc., me thinking all the time it would be a good idea to wish my phone job off on him.

He took me to one side and gave me the distress signal and wanted to know if I could assist him in a small way financially, said he would have money in a few days—had a check coming, and some check too, if what he told me was true, it would make Rockefeller's bank roll look like a pikers bet.

Anyway he shows me an up-to-date, and I fix it with the landlady 'till my pay day.

I don't know what the styles are down south where he came from but this guy had on clothes that looked like he had rented them from an Indian show, his pants and vest were so far apart that they were not in speaking distance, and his hair was so long, that if he ever went out to Wyoming looking like that, they'd shoot him for a buffalo.

Well, Hiram, here it is pay day, and as I have not as yet mailed your letter, guess will write a few more lines and get it started.

Heard from Red O'Brien today and he wants me to come to Chi. and meet him, says he has two jobs in sight out in Wyoming, and wants me to go along with him, so I have quit and willed my job to the "Nut Sundae" and as soon as I can get my watch from old Germ Catcher, your Unk Bill will go Chug-Chugging, Chicago way, because I'm going to leave this man's town and be a long time gone.

Red says the jobs he has in sight are at Hupton, Wyo., "The Best Town On Earth," funny though, Hiram, I never heard of that place, guess it must be a relay job because Red wouldn't go that far for any old thing as long as he has a stake.

Well, guess I will close, as I want to be sure and get that 4:15 train which will bring me into Chicago somewhere tomorrow forenoon and I want to have time, there, to run over on Jackson Boulevard and see Abie Coats and the bunch before we leave town.

I will write you from Hupton, if we land the jobs and I hope we do, for Morse sending will

sure sound like hand painted stuff to yours truly
after what I've been up against.

Fraternally,

Bill.

PS—If I happen ever to get out to Salt Lake,
I'll drop in.

PS-2—That's a joke Hi.

Letter
Number
Seven

Hupton, 19---

Dear Old Pal Hiram:

You remember me telling you about the relay jobs Red had in view out in Wyoming? Well, it wasn't a relay job at all, it was just one more of Red's miscalculations.

We left Chi. the next morning after I arrived there and as usual Red was lit up, which caused yours truly to be considerable worried, because I knew if we ever started out on the trip like this we would get no better—fast.

Well, anyway, we started, but by the time we reached Galesburg, Ill., Red had an audience in the smoking room and was hitting all six with his foot on the gas.

Right then and there I made up my mind that if the chance come, I would pull a pin and go on with the head end of our party letting Red drift, as I had my doubts of him ever reaching Omaha even, with the tonnage he was carrying. Anyway, if we even did, I figured we would never reach Hupton, and if we changed our minds and tried for another job, we would stand about as much chance of landing it as a watermelon would have with a nigger.

Well, Red never lasted to Omaha, for at Red Oak, Iowa, he got off for another drink and when

the train started, I saw him making a run for it, but we passed him like the pay car does a tramp.

That was the last I saw of Mr. O'Brien and from now on I travel single.

I reached Hupton at 5 A. M. Tuesday morning and when the train stopped, and I got off, there were two fellows on the platform having some sort of an argument, and were trying to settle it by proving alabis I guess, but after this failed, one of them used John L. tactics and I'll bet you could have heard the jar in Chicago when the other guy dropped.

"What's coming off here?" I asked the conductor.

"Having a game of Kelly pool A-la-western," says he.

The fellow that did the hitting turned around at this and remarked, "Want to take a hand?"

I told him I didn't as I had a date with a Tea Bone steak and asked him to direct me to a hotel.

"There is the official "Bus Driver" of the Asterbuilt, ask him," said he motioning with his thumb. I turned around and took a look, Oh Mary!, there was the prize gink of them all, he had on a pair of airdale whiskers, wearing a hat that he must have bought when Hayes was running for president, the "Bus," I am positive had

been "held up" many a time by the James boys and it was hitched to a piece of crow-bait that was born when chickens sold for two bits apiece.

I "Bumped the Bumps" to the hotel and was set back one buck by the ancient taxi-man.

They called the hotel a tavern, and there was a bar which they called the tap room, the sleeping rooms were named after the states and I was assigned to Indiana. I never did like Indiana, since the time I worked at QN office at Huntington, Ind., on the Erie RR—but I am getting ahead of my story.

When I opened the door of the Ho— I mean Tavern, a bell rang somewhere in the distance, and an old pair of whiskers stuck its head thru the door behind the desk and inquired what was wanted. He looked like a picture of Noah.

I looked at the heading on the register to see if I hadn't landed on Mount Araat, but it said Hupton all right.

"I want a room and a bath and something to eat" said I.

"We can give you a room and something to eat, but you just naturally will have to bathe yourself" he answered.

I told him first off, I wanted something to eat. He shoved the register towards me and asked what business I was in.

“Telegraph Operator” said I.

“Pay in advance then” said he.

It was some breakfast at that, Hiram, and as I was as hungry as a shipwrecked sailor, I enjoyed it. After breakfast I strolled over into Indiana and laid down for a couple of hours, then went down to the depot, and found that the “Relay Office” was an OS job.

Anyway, left to myself I concluded to stay, and reported for duty and was assigned the second trick, beginning at 4 P. M. and here I am, still on the job and have begun to like it, for about all I have to do is sell tickets, handle express, make out expense bills, OS trains, get an order every few minutes and stay awake, which is some job when there is nothing to do, because if there is any place west of the river more quiet than Hup-ton, I never worked there—unless it was Los Villa, N. M.

I have company, though, sometimes, there is a fellow from Twenty Five Mile ranch drops in to spend the day in town, also his money and by the time night come on, he hits the depot waiting room for lodging.

He tells me he is a cowboy, but has a side line which he works and the other night he told me what his side line was, he is a "Private Detective," or at least he wears a badge which he received after answering an ad in the "Ranchers Monthly Bulletin" and remitting three dollars for postage and packing.

I asked him if he had ever solved any mysteries yet, and he said he hadn't been detecting long, but was always on the lookout for a clew.

Honest, Hiram, you can find them everywhere, can't you. This guy a detective? Smoke! he couldn't track an elephant up a blind alley in four feet of snow if the elephant had the nose bleed.

He told me the other night, he had a girl he had been going with for some time and was going to marry her as soon as he had made good, and live on his own ranch, which he intended to buy later on. Well if he gets that girl, she better learn to do laundry work and move to town, because she will have two to keep.

He claims that before he met this girl he never knew what life was, in fact life had been a blank. He is a truthful cuss anyway, and I agree with him there, and I'll go further it's a blank yet, but I didn't tell him so, because I learned years ago that if a fellow wants to live a long time out west he has to keep his mouth shut.

If I'd go and tell around town here some things I think, why some of my friends would be saying, "I wonder where Bill Nelson is, I haven't seen him in a long time."

We have been having some rotten weather out here lately, it seems as if summer won't ever get here.

I asked the agent the other day what they did out here in the summer and he studied a minute and said he forgot exactly, but thought they always played ball that day.

Another man said they didn't have summer out here, they had six months winter and six months darn late in the fall.

Before I forget it Hiram, you remember old John Paterman, who used to work a premium wire in "CH?", well he is at "BC" Billings now. I was talking to him the other night, he must be nearly sixty years old now but believe me, he is still some op'.

He said he had been at Billings a month now, and may stay longer, as he likes the town as well now as he did thirty-five years ago.

I asked him if "BC" was there thirty-five years ago, and he said yes it had been there longer than that he believed, because he heard once, the rea-

son the call was "BC" was because it was opened the year 8 BC.

Do you remember the time back on the Nickle Plate in Ohio when he was working at Payne, one night the train dispatcher had about worn himself out calling John, when he answered.

"What's the matter" asked the Ds.

"Can't sleep days" answered John, "there is no posts on my bed."

"What has that got to do with it?" snapped the dispr.

"It's got everything to do with it," John answered, "I've got so used to riding brakebeams that I can't go to sleep unless I have my arm around something and this resonater on the table fixes things and I fall to sleep.

"Where are you from?" the Dispr. wanted to know.

"Came from Butte out here" says John, "been living a sort or retired life the past six months, was in jail, am a little rusty on that account, there wasn't any posts on my bed there either."

Of course that was a lie, but old John always had an answer for them, didn't he?

Well, Hiram, they say quiet is food for thought, and I have been doing a lot of thinking here of late.

Do you know, I never thought much of settling down until Red and I separated, and in fact I never thought much about women in general, except the same way I would an elephant or a tiger in the zoo, I always liked to look at them, but never cared to own one, but as I say I've done considerable thinking of late, and often wonder if that little girl back in Ohio is still there.

Say! it would be nice, wouldn't it, all settled down for life with a nice little partner, who can sort of confide to and own a little truck farm, where a fellow could raise the biggest cucumbers and onions and radishes and—chickens.

Gee, was there ever a railroad man in the world who didn't want to raise chickens, I guess not.

So as I say, Hiram, I believe I will save up my jack and one of these times hit the breeze for Ohio and talk things over with the girl, if it isn't too late.

Maybe the next time you hear from me, I will be living a regular guy's life. Oh, I am about through tramping, I know it, so one of these days, when I raise a peeless spud and an odorless onion

and get my name carved on the archives of-of-antiquity and my picture hanging in the hall of fame, amongst famous men, maybe you will be glad that you once knew Bill Nelson, the one time Boomer Op.

Some sob stuff I am getting off isn't it Hi, well you see I am trying to learn big words so that some day I can talk to other people besides railroad men. Well, so long old top, see you again.

Yours, Bill.

Letter
Number
Eight

Galion, Ohio, 19---

Dear Hiram:

Well, old Cake Eater, its been almost two years since I have written you. Got your address out of the Telegrapher, so thought I'd drop you a line o'type or two to let you know where I am.

As Al Jolson says, "I've been away from home a long time," for in 1917 when the big scrap was on, there didn't seem to be anything else to do but try and help out, so I took advantage of a soldier's rights and filed on a homestead near Osage, Wyoming, packed my kit, enlisted and went over there.

I never thought, or figured out what I'd do with the said homestead after I got it, because even if I ever did get married, like I intimated in my last letter, I couldn't ask a woman to camp on a bunch of hills, coulees and sage brush, where you can't plant beans even, unless you would shoot them in the ground with a shotgun.

Anyway, I spent eighteen months shooting Fritzie's and trying to make the world safe for the Democrats, and during this National Pastime I was bumped off temporarily at Soissons, recovered in time to go along with the bunch thru Belleau Wood, where a machine gunner who was a poor shot, hit me in the wrist.

This put me out of commission for sixty days more, then I got busy again and anticipated in the scrimmage at Argonne, this time they busted my leg a bit, so after that they pinned a D. S. on my bosom and told me I was through work.

Poor old Red O'Brien, we left him over there, he fell fighting by my side, but before I left I saw he was taken care of.

I'll say that old Iron Chancellor sure played hell when he raised that boy of his to be a soldier.

I can't see for the life of me why they send clear over to Africa for ivory, when there is plenty of it in Germany, a head-hunter could make more money there than a bead merchant in the South Sea Islands.

Coming over to the states on the transport, I met a fellow from Philadelphia named Mickey Hagan, who according to his statement was returning home to sleep his life away.

Before he enlisted, it seems his favorite indoor sport was standing with his foot on a brass rail, drinking decoction with the kick of a Big Bertha, he was about six feet two in height and built like a battle crusier.

The day I first met him, he was having some sort of an argument with another guy: I was

strolling along the deck, when I heard two reports which sounded like an explosion of TNT, one was when Hagan hit the fellow, the other was when the fellow hit the deck.

Hagan turned around and saw me and grinned, "It's too bad" says he, "that the good Lord had to put marble tops on such cheap furniture."

"Come on" said I, "before the Captain pulls the bell cord and puts us off in the middle of the ocean.

We wandered down to the men's salon and compared notes.

"Romeo must have been that guys great uncle" said Hagan.

"Why" I wanted to know.

"Because" said he, "he's been trying for three days to pick up with a Miss Peaches, who happened to be a nurse in the Base Hospital, when I was there, and he couldn't tumble that she had about as much use for him as Lloyd George has for the Kaiser, so I steps in and slaps him on the wrist."

"Some slap I'll say" says I.

Hagan was about as much excited over what had happened as the Sultan of Turkey would be to see a camel.

When we arrived in New York, I received a telegram from J. G. Caple, the lawyer at Hupton where I worked before leaving for France and who helped me file on the Osage claim, and J. G. says that there is a standing offer of \$30,000 for the rights to drill for oil on my place, which I haven't even proved up on yet.

Gee, I almost had a stroke, THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS to be handed to me just for the asking, well I immediately sent a telegram to J. G.—COLLECT, because all the money I had, was still coming to me—and told him I was on my way out Where the West Begins.

I borrowed enough from Hagan to pay my fare and started west.

At Osage, J. G. met me at the depot with his horse and buggy, which was to take us to the oil fields, J. G. called his horse Napoleon Bonepart, but there wasn't anything left of him but the Bony Part, at that old J. G. didn't have anything on him. J. G. always wore a pair of rubber tired glasses and dressed like he still owned the first dime he ever earned, he did about as much business there as a barber in Russia.

But he was all right at that, and had things fixed so that I could either sell outright for Sixty Thousand simoleons or lease with royalties at



J. G. wore a pair of rubber tire glasses and dressed like he still had the first dime he ever earned.

thirty thousand so to make a long story short I chose the former and sold out bag and baggage.

Gee, Hi, with a New York draft for all this in my pocket at once I felt so good, that I'd have wagged my tail if I'd been a dog and if the people knew what I was thinking at that time, the Sunday Supplements wouldn't have been worth reading.

Well of course I headed straight for Galion, Ohio, at which place I arrived three days later on Erie Number 4.

There was the usual bunch hanging around the depot to watch the train come in—and what do you know, Hiram, the first one I saw was Mary Truesdale—The Only Girl—Looking like a million dollars and as surprised as a kid Christmas morning.

“Why Billy Nelson!—Why—where on earth did you come from” she wanted to know.

“From all over” said I, “but the journey is ended Mary, and its me to keep the Home Fires Burning from now on, but its a long story, and will take a lot of time and patience to tell it, so before the band arrives lets meander over to Palliases and buy a dissipation special.”

“Same old Bill,” says Mary, “Gee, it seems too good to be true,” says she laughing, and Oh Boy,

you should have seen the way her face lit up when I told her I was figuring on becoming a permanent resident of Crawford County, Ohio.

I was heavy for the Old Home Town, from right then, well, anyway, I wised her up a bit as to my actions the past four years, but never a word about the Oil deal.

That afternoon I deposited the check in the Bank, drew out a couple of hundred, dropped into Geigers and dolled up with the best I could buy from the inside out and at eight bells I strolled down Market street to the Truesdale homestead looking and feeling like a Millionaire and touched the front door button.

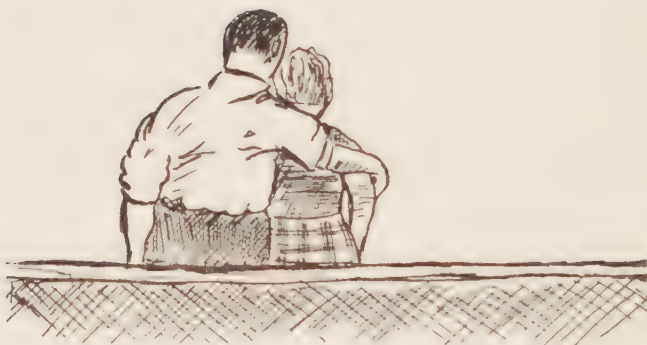
Mary and her mother lived alone, her father having died a year ago and Mary had been keeping the wolf away by helping in Tracht's Millinery shop, anyway I am more than welcome.

Mrs. T., left us setting on the porch about nine o'clock, and went to bed. There was a moon, Hiram, and Mary was setting close, so I reached down and took her hand.

"Mary," I says low like, "four years ago I left here because I didn't have the nerve to tell you what I am going to to-night."

"Yes," she whispered.

"Mary, I love you," says I.



"Mary," says I low like, "four years ago I left here because I didn't have the nerve to tell you what I'm going to tonight."

"Make two copies of that Billy," says she.

"And listen, Honey," I goes on, "your mother and you need a man to look after the old place now that your father has gone, so what I want to know dear, will you change your sine?"

"Why Billy Boy," said she, "of course I will, let's make it "MO" from now on, but you made me wait a long time, you old dear."

There you are Hiram, and then what I had been thinking about all afternoon was over in ten seconds—I had kissed her, and listen, if Mary ever finds out I've told you all this, I suppose I'd get my first calling down, but I am so darn happy that I just had to tell somebody.

We are going to be married June 10th and I am going to have one Heck of a time, I am afraid, explaining why I have so much money, but then I know she took me for what I am or was and I am going to try and make myself good enough for her.

Well, Hiram, come and see us.

Bill.

WOULDN'T STAY LONG

A Boomer Op' died and went to heaven. He knocked at the gate and as St. Peter was absent just then, an attendant answered.

"I would like to come inside," said the "Boomer."

"What is your name and address," he was asked.

"I am a telegraph operator from Chicago and my name is So-and So."

"What office did you work in last?"

This information was also given.

"Well just wait a minute and I'll see."

The gatekeeper consulted St. Peter and St. Peter consulted his records, "We have no record of him" said he, "did you say he was a telegraph operator from Chicago?"

"Yes."

"Oh well then, let him in, he won't stay long, those fellows never stay long anywhere."

A TOAST

Good bye to the Op' of the Olden Time
With his pen copy even and true
Each hour he'd take without a break
Forty or Fifty from you
Good bye to the Op' of the Olden Time
God bless him, true as steel
He'd never say "No" to a wandering Bro'
Who asked him for a meal
So here's to the Op' of the Olden Time
Whose history, brief, is given
And let us try, that when we die
To shake his hand in heaven

A SECTION FOREMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Roadmaster,

deer sur:

Yours in regard to the killin' av the bull—i can niver say how he iver got thru the gates, but nivertheless him wid several companions were cavorting up an down the right-of-way, when presently along come number seven hits the little bull a whelt, knocking him to the pit below, breaking his bones to atoms and the bull is dead.

Yours humble servant

St. Johns Ohio

Jerry O'Hern

Section 4



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